

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

**Children Unlimited, Inc.
Jackie Sparks, Administrator**

**Final Report
June 28, 2000**

**Visit Conducted on:
May 23, 2000**

Team Members:

Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu, Chairperson

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

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(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

Children Unlimited, Inc.

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at Children Unlimited, Inc. The visiting team met on May 23, 2000 in order to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Program Director, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from all personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on December 1994*

Based on review of the NH Department of Education Program Approval Report written in December 1994, review of application materials submitted for the June 2000 visit and a random review of student records, it was determined that much effort has been put forth to resolve the minor oversights in paperwork compliance.

The previous report reflected a very well designed early childhood program that offered quality services to all students. The 1994 report listed numerous commendations pointing to the overall excellence of the programming made available to students enrolled at Children Unlimited. Commendations noted in the previous report included a developmentally appropriate curriculum, successful inclusionary practices, skilled staff, and a sense of teamwork, parental involvement, outstanding leadership and a sense of enthusiasm within each classroom. All of these commendations were again recognized and it is apparent that the services offered to the youngsters enrolled at Children Unlimited are well designed, and highly effective.

The minor paperwork citations noted in the last report are still in process of being addressed and Children Unlimited works hard to ensure that the LEA's provide all the required paperwork.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

During the May 2000 visit to Children Unlimited it was clear that the preschool programming and services provided to all children are of high quality. The facility is clean, in good condition and staff provide a very cheerful, motivating and nurturing learning environment for the children enrolled and there were not major issues of significance identified. The staff is knowledgeable, well qualified and demonstrates an exceptional ability to provide uniquely designed preschool programming for a very diverse student population. It should be further noted that the youngsters attending programs at Children Unlimited are well cared for and provided with excellent therapeutic and educational supports. The atmosphere throughout the facility can be described as warm, enthusiastic, and supportive. The curriculum and instruction offered to the preschoolers is well developed and is age and ability appropriate. The staff is commended for their willingness to seek ongoing professional development and make connections with the sending school districts.

As part of the program approval visit, only a few minor citations were identified, most of which are due to oversights in paperwork compliance. For this reason, continued efforts need to be put forth to ensure that the LEA's are providing Children Unlimited with essential information as outlined in the NH Standards for Students with Disabilities. This would include evaluation summary reports, placement team decisions, and minutes of meetings and documentation that extended school year programming is being considered for all students who have individual education plans.

Overall, it can be said that Children Unlimited has a specialized expertise in early childhood education and working with young children who have disabilities. The program is quite impressive, and as the facility looks to the future they may find a larger role in early childhood education and outreach they could provide to other preschool programs and public schools. The staff at Children Unlimited are thanked for the welcoming spirit and cooperation during the program approval visit and recognized for the excellent work they do on a daily basis.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: FACILITY-WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- Children Unlimited is commended for the effective utilization of inclusionary practices and provision of services in the least restrictive environment.
- Staff have an excellent working relationship with parents and supplemental community agencies.
- Children Unlimited works hard to locate funding sources to ensure all student needs are met.
- At Children Unlimited, there is a true sense of community and all staff work together in a very collegial manner.
- There is an open line of communication between staff, parents and sending school districts.
- The learning environment is warm, nurturing, colorful and conducive to teaching young children.
- The Executive Director is well respected, knowledgeable and provides outstanding leadership.
- Parents are actively involved in the programs.
- Staff and students work hard to ensure that children with disabilities are accepted and active participants in all school activities.
- The young children enrolled in the programs demonstrate tolerance and friendships among a very diverse student population. Staff assist in cultivating friendships between non-disabled children and their peers who have special needs.
- All of the staff at Children Unlimited feel valued, informed and part of a team.
- The programs have ample supplies and materials.
- Staff are open to professional development opportunities.
- Children Unlimited invest time and energy ensure that transition into the program or into the elementary school setting is smooth and successful.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

<u>Ed. 1109.04(d)</u>	<u>Procedural Safeguards</u> 2 files lacked evidence that parents had been provided with a copy of procedural safeguards. (No minutes were on file to document this.)
<u>Ed. 1111.01</u>	<u>Extended School Year Programming</u> 2 files lacked evidence that the LEA had considered extended school year programming for students.
<u>Ed. 1109.03</u>	<u>Placement Decisions</u> 2 files lacked minutes of meetings where placement was discussed; therefore, it was not clear who attended the meeting, what decisions were made or if a Children Unlimited representative was involved in the team's decision.

Ed. 1123.05

Notification of Parental Rights

Since notices of meetings and minutes were not in student records, it was not possible to determine if the LEA had distributed parental rights at all required meetings.

Ed. 1133.05(k)

Program Requirements

Ed. 1133.08(a)

Qualification of Service Providers

There is no staff member or contracted consultant certified in special education currently working with the program.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Children Unlimited might want to explore the possibility of participating in more professional development opportunities that are conducted within SAU # 9. It might also be helpful to explore how Children Unlimited might be able to share their professional expertise and skills with staff in surrounding school districts.
- The staff and administration may want to consider additional training in the area of new IDEA regulations, especially those related to IEPs.
- The administration at Children Unlimited needs to give serious consideration to expanding the physical facilities. Space is at a premium and places constraints upon the services/programming made available to the students. During the visit, it became apparent that conditions in classrooms are crowded and not always conducive to the teaching/learning process. The staff also need office space and meeting rooms that are handicap accessible and confidential for discussions with parents and LEAs.
- The Executive Director or designee may want to consider membership in the New Hampshire Special Education Administrators Association. This would enable the program to be kept informed of new developments in the field and initiatives offered by the New Hampshire Department of Education.
- Children Unlimited needs to explore expansion of the outdoor play area.
- It is strongly suggested that Children Unlimited review the IDEA Federal regulations to ensure that these requirements are met (ie IEP goals that are measurable with objectives or benchmarks).

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

Children Unlimited, Inc.

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

Children Unlimited, Inc.

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 0 FILES

No students currently enrolled at Children Unlimited, Inc. fall under the James O' Consent Decree.